UGANDA NATIONAL ACTION ON PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Report on the Accessibility Audit of Six Schools in Rubirizi District

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Submitted to:
The Executive Director
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Reported by:
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The National Union of Disabled Person of Uganda (NUDIPU) is implementing a project OD Youth in Rubirizi District aimed at promoting the education of Children with Disability (CWDs). In a baseline survey carried out by WINDS Consult, it was pointed out that one of the major deterrent factors to enrolment and retention of CWDs in schools is inaccessibility to the school physical infrastructure and lack of learning facilities for the deaf and blind children.

NUDIPU therefore partnered with Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) to assess the state of access (Accessibility Auditing) to the physical environment and information by CWDs in six sampled schools in Rubirizi district. The schools included St. Michael S.S.S., Mwongera S.S.S, Mwongera Primary School, Buhinda Primary School, Rugazi Primary School, and Kyamwiru Primary School.

UNAPD is a national umbrella organisation of people with physical disability and has taken on Accessibility Auditing as one of the fundamental activities intended to promote the observance of the human rights of all people particularly in regard to accessibility.

UNAPD spearheaded the development of Accessibility Standards and also instituted a National Accessibility Audit Committee (NAAC) to conduct Accessibility Audits (AA) in all facilities where the public is ordinarily invited in Uganda, to establish their state of Accessibility. The organisation also developed an Accessibility Audit Tool (AAT), a checklist used during AA.

NUDIPU called on UNAPD to avail a staff to support it to audit six schools in Rubirizi. This report therefore reveals the findings at each school and also
apportions recommendations for Government, Civil Society Organisations and School Authorities.

1.2 Objectives of AA

The audit was intended to:

1. Assess the current level of access to school environment by learners with disabilities.
2. Share the findings of the audit and Propose recommendations for improvement.
3. Generate and apportion responsibilities to improve access to education by YPWDs in the audited institutions.

1.3 Methodology

NUDIPU asked UNAPD to identify a staff who was the lead facilitator of the entire auditing exercise. The lead facilitator shared the audit tool with NUDIPU. The tool had checklists that were only capturing access to the physical environment and it was slightly revised to capture access to information for the purpose of this exercise.

The exercise began on December 10 with the lead facilitator briefly training six stakeholders in accessibility and AA, two of which (engineer and inspector of schools) joined him for AA. The six trainees were the district engineer, two inspector of schools, two district councilors for PWDs, chairperson for UDIP, one disabled youth leader.

In each school the team met with the headmaster and their delegates and briefed them about the exercise. The head teachers took the AAT around who assessed the school facilities including classroom blocks, administrative blocks, dormitories, toilets, libraries, pathways, doors and windows.
During AA the head teachers were also sensitized about accessibility and they participated in the AA exercise.

After the field exercise, a draft report was compiled and presented at a stakeholders workshop for validation. The participants included heads of the DLG departments, the AAT, head teachers and/or their representatives, PWDs councillors at the district, DU chairperson and a representative of the YPWDs.

1.4 The AA Team

The AA Team consisted of:

- Hamad Lubwama UNAPD staff
- Inspector of Schools Rubirizi DLG
- Assistant Engineer in charge of Works Rubirizi DLG
1.5 Accessibility

The term Accessibility from the point of view of UNAPD means: “the universal possibility in a facility, where the general public is ordinarily invited, to be reached by all persons interested in and intending to enter; to enter, manoeuvre themselves within with ease, use the facility or the services therein without undue difficulty posed by inbuilt hindrances, with dignity and without a high risk of sustaining bodily injury in the process of entering or using the facility so entered”.

1.6 The Six Doctrines of Accessibility

The key concepts that the term “Accessibility” brings into being are:

(a) **The Doctrine of Universal Design (the Universal Possibility) in a facility** – means that when designing and constructing any facility such as a building, road, stadium, places of entertainment and recreation, Educational and Health Centres, Shopping Arcades, Offices, Places of Human Convenience (Latrines, Toilets, Urinals and Washrooms), Homes, etc, due regard should be placed in the usability of the of the facility by all the population spectrum and continuum. Technically this is known as “Universal Design”.

(b) **The Doctrine of General Invitation to the Public** – implies that by social design, a perpetual call and an offer, without segregation or discrimination has been made to every person who gets to know about the facility, that it is available to be used by all persons who are interested in and intending to benefit from the whatever legal service or ease to life is found therein.

(c) **The Doctrine of Reach, Enter and Use (REU)** – Means that every person intending to benefit from whatever legal service or ease to life is found in
a facility, can, without undue difficulty posed by inbuilt or hitherto naturally existing hindrances or barriers, reach, enter and use the facility. It should not in its presentation for use pose difficulties, or burden to any intending user or suffer anyone the shame, horror, disgust or indignation of failing to reach, enter, use or benefit from the existing facility.

(d) **The Doctrine of manoeuvrability** – Means that; in order to use or benefit from the availability of a facility, every user has to make movements within that facility which are convenient for that person to gain comfortable use of the facility and successfully complete the legal business he or she intended accomplish therein.

(e) **The Doctrine of dignity in the use of a facility** – Means that every person going to use any facility where general public is ordinarily invited should not suffer any form of indignity in the use of the facility. Suffering indignity in the use of a facility includes but may not be limited to:

(i) Becoming dirty or soiled in any way on the palms, feet, skin or clothing;
(ii) Obtaining bad odour in the cause of using a facility;
(iii) Suffering shame, horror, disgust or indignation or injury to a person’s ego or self-worth in the course of using a facility;
(iv) Exposing to the view of another person such body parts culturally not dignified or commendable for the gaze of other parsons;
(v) Requiring a person, in the course of providing assistance to another to reach, enter and use a facility, to touch such body parts of the person receiving assistance culturally not dignified or commendable for random touching of other parsons;
(vi) Renting a users apparel in the course of using a facility;
The Doctrine of Low Risk of Sustaining Bodily Injury - Means that there should be, within the limits of normalcy, very low risk or likelihood to users of a facility to suffer bodily injury arising from the presentation of a facility to the users.

1.7 Accessibility Audit

Accessibility Audit is the function of assessing, analysing and investigating any facility where the general public is ordinarily invited, based on an Accessibility Audit Tool (AAT), to determine the extent to which the facility under review complies with the Six Doctrines of Accessibility, with a view to express an opinion on the extent to which the facility is accessible and make a report there from to the persons who have jurisdiction over the facility under review.

2.0 ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT IN RUBIRIZI

2.1 Basis of the AA

The team in Rubirizi conducted the AA there in accordance with:

(i) Uganda Constitution Article 30 and 31(1), 1995
(iii) The Persons with Disability Act, 2006, Part IV, Section 19 and 20
(iv) UNAPD Accessibility Standards

2.2 The Schools Audited

The Team conducted AA in the following places;

1. St. Michael S.S.S. (Ryeru Town Council),
2. Mwongera S.S.S (Katerera Sub County),
3. Mwongera Primary School (Katerera Sub County)

4. Buhinda Primary School (Rutoto Sub County),

5. Rugazi Primary School (Rubirizi Town Council),

6. Kyamwiru Primary School-(Katerera Sub-county)

The audit team on duty with the head teacher of Rugazi Primary School
2.3 General findings and comments

The schools had some strength and weaknesses in accessibility as indicated below.

All the school visited had running water or bore holes but the taps and pathways leading to the water sources were not accessible.

2.3.1 Best practices

1. All the six schools visited had good water sources. Five schools had piped water while one had a borehole. However, the water sources were not easily accessible as there were no pathways leading to the taps or the pathways had obstructions like drainage channels, unlevel terrain. All the taps were also not a push type but rather a turn type that is difficult to operate by children with deformed fingers or without fingers. The borehole
was not also the standard type where a person using a tricycle can easily independently draw water.

2. The windows were reasonable in number and wide enough to allow in enough light. For the metallic ones when fully opened could lay flat on the walls and therefore reduce the chances of hurting children playing/moving on the verandahs. However, some schools have wooden windows that cannot rest on the walls even when fully opened.

3. Most schools had unpaved but fairly accessible pathways with flat or low gradient. They were also wide enough for a wheelchair to pass.

2.3.2 Gaps

2.3.2.1 Access to Physical environment

1. Many schools lack ramps and those that have them are either substandard and placed on very few entrances. No school was found with a standard ramp out of the seven ramps found in the six schools. Ramps had high gradients, narrow, without handrails and some not connected to accessible pathways.

2. Most of the school administrators had limited knowledge on accessibility and those that had some knowledge thought accessibility is only about having a ramp and did not consider things like wide doors with reachable and easy-to-operate handles, accessible pathways and latrines, many others.

3. Gloss inaccessibility to and sorry state of the latrines. No any school had a separate special latrine for CWDs as provided for under the relevant legislations, policies and guidelines. Crawling children or those in wheel chairs have to crawl in the latrines that were above all, in most cases, found unhygienic conditions.

4. No any school had a special bathroom for CWDs. Day schools did not have even the general bathrooms. Even some of the boarding schools
had makeshift (temporary) bathrooms made out of worn out iron sheets without cemented floors.

5. Most of the doors and entrances were narrow and a CWD using a wheel chair could hardly or not go through at all. Most of the door handles were the T-shaped not the recommended L-shaped type. The T-shaped type is not easy to operate by children with deformed or without fingers. The edges of the door frames particularly the metallic ones were not blunt and could hurt children more especially those with limited vision.

6. Lack of approved building plans and designs for the schools. Construction works were going on in some of the schools like Mwongera SSS (dormitory) and St. Michael High School (classroom block) without duly approved plans. Even the basic accessibility facility like a ramp is not provided for in these constructions.

7. No any school has a cushioned chair or bench suitable for use by CWDs especially those using calipers. The desks were standard but most of the benches were 8-9cm narrower than the ideal width of 30cm.
2.3.2.2.1 Access to information

1. Low enrollment of children with disability in general particularly those with physical disability. There were only about 50 children with disability enrolled in the six schools out of a total enrolment of about 3000 children. Only four of the children in three schools had physical
disability. This low enrolment was attributed to school facilities being inaccessible and failure by parents to take their children to schools because they think that their children cannot be able to study and get employment thereafter.

2. General lack of special teaching aide and materials for CWDs particularly the blind. No any school – even those with units for CWDs – had Braille machines with its consumables or any brailled learning materials and audio devices like tape recorders and cassettes. Five schools had children with low vision but without any leaning material in large print format.

2.3.3 Attainments

The team attained the following:

An audit team member taking measurements to assess whether the notice board at Mwongera P/S is Standard.
(a) Successful AA – the team succeeded in completing the audit of all the scheduled schools

(b) Awareness Raising on Accessibility – The team, where ever it went, was received with fear and suspicion, but by the time it left, the operators of the facilities audited clearly convinced of the need for accessibility and were even appreciative that their premises were chosen for audit.

(c) Accessibility Sensitization – where ever the team went, it took time to give a small lecture on what true accessibility is. This is because most people the team interacted with knew that a ramp of any nature at the entrance of a building was adequate accessibility.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are grouped under three categories including for the DLG, School Authorities and Civil Society Organisations.

2.4 Recommendations for Rubirizi DLG

1. The district engineers should use and enforce accessibility standards when schools are making new constructions, renovating or reconstructing old buildings. They should also not allow any new constructions to take place in the schools without an approved plan with accessible facilities. They should also carry out timely monitoring and inspection of construction projects to make sure that they conform to the approved plans and designs.

2. The engineers should immediately stop all construction works that is underway in the district without approved plans and designs. For example, construction of a three classroom block at St. Michael High School and a girls’ dormitory at Mwongera S.S should be immediately stopped until their plans and designs are approved.
3. The inspectors of schools should look at accessibility while doing their routine inspections. This calls for redesigning of the checklist or tool they use for inspection to capture basic accessibility indicators like ramps, sit on toilets with handrails, wide entrances, among others.

4. The district should provide at least one special needs teacher per school, brailling and printing in large format all the elementary learning materials. It should also secure for every school audio facilities for use by the blind children such as cassettes and tape recorders. The district can achieve this by sourcing for partners like NUDIPU, Uganda National Association of the Deaf, Uganda National Association of the Blind, World Vision, etc.

The audit team and head teacher assessing a ramp at one of the classroom blocks at Rugazi Primary School
2.5 Recommendations for School Authorities

1. The school administration should construct standard ramps on all building blocks to make it easy for children with limited movement to access classrooms, dormitories and offices. Prior to construction of the ramps, the school administration should seek for technical advice from the engineer.

2. The school administration should construct at least one special accessible latrine for children with disability with features including a sit-on facility, handrails and wide entrances. The latrine room should also be wide enough for a wheelchair person to enter and turn within.

3. The school managements should avoid using wooden doors and windows as even when fully opened cannot lay flat on the walls. There is therefore high probability of hurting pupils/students/staff, who may be moving or playing on the verandahs. Wooden windows are not also easily fitted with burglar proofs for security purposes and pupil’s protection.

3.3 Recommendations for Civil Society Organisations

1. The district, NUDIPU, UNAPD should organize sensitization workshops and talk shows on local radio stations about accessibility for all stakeholders in education. The stakeholders that should mainly be targeted are school head teachers and teachers, schools board and management committees, all inspectors of schools, subcounty chiefs and chairpersons, town clerks and mayors.

2. The district in collaboration with NUDIPU and other Disabled People’s Organisations should carry out a massive sensitization of parents of children with disability and the entire community about the importance of educating children with disability. This exercise should be preceded with a survey by the District Community Department, to establish the homes and number of children with disability. The results of this survey will inform proper planning, follow-up and support to the families and children with
disability. The sensitization can be done through home visits, churches, radio talk shows, workshops and at any social gathering.

3. There is need to get together all Councillors representing Persons with Disabilities in Local Councils to understand accessibility and the meaning of representation and to create local accessibility advocates and monitors out of them.